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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, August 12, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TWO FAMILY FARMHOUSES." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Bulletin available, "Modernizing Farmhouses," No. 1749-F.

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A two family house out in the country! The very idea, with all the ground available on a farm! But probably the two families are related. Perhaps the old folks constitute one unit, and a married son or daughter the other family. Sometimes they are old neighbors or life-long friends.

Both families want to hold down the cost of living. Being under one roof, sometimes being heated by one furnace, is obviously economical. Then, too, houses are often far apart in rural sections. It's sociable for two congenial families to be able to spend their leisure hours together occasionally, without the trouble of dressing up and going out. Especially in winter-time. Farm housewives may also feel that there is an element of protection and safety in having two women in the house during the day if the menfolks are working in fields some distance away.

It used to be the custom for the older members of farm families to retire to town, leaving a married son or daughter on the farm. But in some cases it was necessary for economy or desirable from the standpoint of assistance with the farm work, for the retiring older couple to stay on the land. Certainly it reduces the overhead in the cost of living for two branches of a family to live under one roof, anywhere. On the farm, the experience and help of the older farmer may increase the total joint income, or the savings of the father and mother may go toward improving the farmstead instead of being used to live in another place.

The doubling up of a family may be arranged by adding to the old farm home, by changing it, or by building another house nearby on the land. But that old trouble maker, Human Nature, sometimes renders it impossible for the two families to be happy when thrown constantly in each other's company. It has been said that no kitchen is large enough to be run by two housewives, particularly if they are of different generations. Again, husbands and wives like to enjoy their meals and evenings together without the presence of other people, even relatives. So if both branches of the family have a financial interest in the farm and want to live on the land, it is a much better arrangement for them to have entirely separate living quarters.

It's been found more economical for all concerned to make over a large, old-fashioned farmhouse into two separate "apartments" or units, than to build another house. Sometimes the two-family arrangement is obtained by horizontal division, sometimes by vertical. That is to say, by giving a floor to each family, or by using a partition between the two sides of the house, just as the walls of a city house in a row cut it off from its neighbors. In the first case, the same entrance, entrance hall and stairway serves both families. In the second, there are entirely separate entrances and inside stairways.

I have mentioned several times the bulletin on Modernizing Farmhouses, No. 1749-F, I'll call attention to it once more for the sake of those among my listeners who would like to look into the possibilities of a two-family arrangement for a farmhouse. The last farmhouse described in the bulletin was turned into a two-family dwelling very successfully. The vertical, or partition plan of dividing it was used. The cost was much less than for building a new cottage or bungalow elsewhere on the property. Of course the owner made sure the house was in sufficiently good condition to warrant the cash investment and the work of remodeling. This house is in Michigan, and has been in satisfactory use by the owner and his married son for several years.

Before it was remodeled the house had 11 rooms, so it was easy to plan for the younger family to have the use of 5 of them and still leave 6 for the parents. So you can understand the alterations, I'll try to describe the house. It was somewhat like a shallow "ell" in shape. Across part of the front there was a large screened porch. This had two doors, one opening into a good-sized living-room, and the other opening into a "music room" at the side. Behind the music room were two unused bed-rooms. These three rooms and the bed-rooms directly above them were what was partitioned off for the younger couple, leaving the ordinary arrangement of living-room, dining-room, kitchen, and second floor bed-rooms above them for the old folks. Stairs went to the second floor from a point opposite the main entrance.

By closing up all doors between the music wing and the living and working part of the ground floor, the young couple quickly and inexpensively had a place of their own. On the second floor the two bed-rooms in the wing were also partitioned off. Space was taken for a separate inside stairway to these second floor bed-rooms. Part of one of them was cut off to give room for a bath-room and a small upper hall leading to the new stairs. The down-stairs bed-rooms in the wing were converted into a dining-room and a kitchen. A new screened porch off the new kitchen gives a comfortable working space in summer and protection to the kitchen doorway in winter.

Another change was to build a new chimney on the outside wall of the former music room, so the new living room might have a cheery fireplace, and also so that a separate one-pipe furnace might be installed. In many cases the old furnace might do for both families, if no additional rooms were built, but in this instance it was thought better for each family to have control over its own heating plant.

Outside and inside stairways were built to the basement where laundry equipment was installed. This is used jointly. The front porch has an entrance door to each apartment. In all other respects the two units of the house are entirely separate.

Instead of putting money into a new structure, these families used less and put it into improvements and conveniences that have made the old home a very pleasant and comfortable place in which to live. The remodeling was a rather gradual process. It was actually spread over a period of 6 or 7 years, with additions at intervals of the screened porches, laundry room, a bay window, bath-room, and finally the partitioning and building of the new stairway.

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